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ABSTRACT

Arguing that there is still no single, noncontroversial foundation on which the world's present multi-structure of ethics can be built, this paper examines a scientific ethics approach. It is postulated that in North American culture, the approach to instruction in ethics for youth is haphazard at best. Society does not provide an adequate means whereby a young person can bridge the gap between an implicit, developing ethical sense of life, and there is no emphasis on what should in maturity become a sounder, more explicit approach to the making of ethical decisions about life in which sport and physical activity is a part. After briefly presenting the extant major ethical routes available to the reasoning adult in the Western world, application of scientific method through pragmatic ethical analysis is explained. The use of professional basketball players to make up the United States Olympic squad in Barcelona in 1992, in an effort to win the gold medal, points out how far the International Olympic Committee has strayed from the earlier amateur ideal. The theoretical basis for a scientific ethics approach is applied to the amateur-semiprofessional-professional controversy in sport as an example in the belief that such an approach could assist evolving North American democratic society today. (Author/LL)

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A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO APPLIED ETHICS
IN SPORT AND RELATED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Abstract

Arguing that there is still no single, non-controversial foundation on which the world's present multi-structure of ethics can be built, the author reiterates the idea that a scientific ethics approach would be best for the present and for the foreseeable future (1988). He postulates that, in North American culture, the approach to instruction in ethics for youth is haphazard at best. Society does not provide an adequate means whereby the young person can bridge the gap between an implicit, developing ethical "sense of life" (Rand). Then there is no emphasis on what should in maturity become a sounder, more explicit approach to the making of ethical decisions about life in which sport and physical activity is a part. After briefly presenting the extant major ethical "routes" available to the reasoning adult in the Western world, the author explains why he believes the application of scientific method through pragmatic ethical analysis seems necessary at present. As an example, the author explains that the use of professional basketball players earning multi-million dollar salaries to make up the United States Olympic squad in Barcelona in 1992 in an effort to win the gold medal points out how far the International Olympic Committee has strayed from the earlier amateur ideal propounded by De Coubertin and Brundage. This shift has occurred through drift, changing times, and an inordinate pressure to win. To aid in the analysis of this ridiculous situation, the theoretical basis for a scientific ethics approach to issues of this nature is applied to the amateur-semiprofessional-professional controversy in sport as an example in the belief that such an approach could assist our evolving democratic society today.

A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO APPLIED ETHICS
IN SPORT AND RELATED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Human beings have made at least recognizable progress in their ongoing relationship to the surrounding environment. However, as we approach the year 2000 it is increasingly apparent that--despite the lowering of tensions between so-called superpowers--there is still great insecurity in people's attempt to live together constructively and peacefully on our closed planet.* More than a quarter of a century ago, Burt (1965) wrote that "The greatest danger to his future lies in the distorting emotions and destructive passions that he has not yet overcome" (p. 311). Looking ahead hopefully, he stated that humans did have a capacity for self-understanding, and this therefore offered the possibility of entering the "inclusive universe" as humans strove for freedom and self-fulfillment.

In the mid-1970s in North America, a developing awareness of the need for the application of an ethical approach to personal and professional living became apparent from various sources. The New York Times reported on Feb. 26, 1978 that "nowadays students in many disciplines are enrolling in new ethics courses in a variety of undergraduate departments and professional schools. . . . part of the impetus for new programs stems from the social consciousness of the 1960s." This social consciousness has heightened in the 1980s' decade,

* A paper presented to the Applied Ethics Workshop sponsored by the College and University Physical Education Council of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, Indianapolis, Indiana, April 7, 1992.

so that Fox and DeMarco in 1986 stated,

For little more than a decade, philosophic ethics has been faced with a relatively new challenge: to provide theoretical frameworks within which practical moral problems can be solved. This challenge has been posed from many quarters, from outside as well as within philosophy.

Thus, on this very day in 1992 there are at least three separate conferences or workshops on the topic of ethics related to physical activity and sport taking place in the hotel where we are at this moment!

The term "ethics" is employed typically in three different ways, each of which has a relation to the other, and all of which will be used here. First, it is used to classify a general pattern or "way of life" (e.g., Muslim or Christian ethics). Second, it refers to a listing of rules of conduct, or what is called a moral code (e.g., the "fair play" ethics of an athlete in a particular culture). Last, it has come to be used when describing inquiry about ways of life and rules of conduct (e.g., that subdivision of philosophy known as metaethics).

Brief Background

The history of ethics has been characterized by "irregular progress toward complete clarification of each type of ethical judgment" (Encyclopedia of Philosophy, III, p. 82). It is obvious that changing political, economic, and other social forces of the various historical

periods required the introduction of new ways of conduct--just as today people evidently believe that there is a need for the inculcation of applied ethics experiences during this transitional period.

In considering this topic, we are confronted with the basic question: "What are humans?" How do we view human nature? Different views about human nature are what have increased the complexity of the topic at hand. A number of these views are accordingly reflected in the extant approaches to the making of ethical decisions. Stevenson (1987) has propounded seven views of human nature for us to consider: (1) Plato: The Rule of the Wise; (2) Christianity: God's Salvation; (3) Marx: Communist Revolution; (4) Freud: Psychoanalysis; (5) Sartre: Atheistic Existentialism; (6) Skinner: The Conditioning of Behavior; and (7) Lorenz: Innate Aggression. Obviously, the extent to which one subscribes to one of these views of human nature, or even another extant view, will have an effect on people's ethical decision-making.

Because of changing emphases in "doing" philosophy, the field of ethics in life generally--and, yes, in sport and physical education philosophy too--has been left to theologians, dramatists, novelists, poets, medical doctors, politicians, jurists, scientists, comedians, sport figures, and educational administrators in no special order of importance. These usually well-intentioned people offer a variety of opinions ranging from suggestions to dogma about what is good and bad, right and wrong, about all aspects of life including sport and games.

Thus, it does indeed make sense for us as professionals in sport and physical education (kinesiology, if you will) to be working toward the elimination of irrational beliefs. At the same time, each of us as a presumably free individual in an evolving society, should attempt to discover the soundest possible approach to ethical decision-making. Recognizing that the task of normative inquiry can be most difficult, we need to justify our own personal theory of ethics that can be applied to both personal and professional living. It should be readily apparent that an intelligent person should be able to state correctly, elucidate sufficiently, and defend adequately his/her moral or ethical claims and arguments about participation in developmental physical activity in exercise, sport, and related experiences.

A Person's Implicit "Sense of Life"

For better or worse, each of us within individual growth and development patterns have been conditioned by what Rand (1960) called a "psychological recorder"--i.e., the integrating mechanism of a person's subconscious. This so-called "sense of life" is, she said, "a pre-conceptual equivalent of metaphysics, an emotional, subconscious integrated appraisal of man and existence. It sets the nature of a person's emotional response and the essence of that person's character" (p. 31). Once again, for better or worse, this child or young person is making choices, forming value judgments, experiencing emotions, and in many, many ways is acquiring an implicit view of life.

So far so good--we hope. Our further hope, as professionals interested in education and philosophy, is that all young people will move on from this point to develop their rational powers. In such instances, reason can then act as the "programmer" of the individual's "emotional computer" with a possible outcome that the "program" will result in the eventual development of a reasonably logical and rational life philosophy. We certainly want to avoid at all costs an adolescent who is "integrating blindly, incongruously, and at random" (1960, p. 33). Thus conceived, the goal of education is an individual whose mind and emotions are in harmony, thereby enabling the person to develop his or her potential and achieve maximum effectiveness in life. To the greatest possible extent, we eventually want a mature person whose mind leads and whose emotions follow any such dictates in social living including regular involvement in sport and physical activity.

The Selection of One from Among Several Ethical Routes

For years I have been arguing that highly competitive sport in U.S. life has become too strong a social influence. This might not be a problem if the positive personal and societal influences emanating from participation as players, coaches, owners, spectators, and administrators were obviously clearly superior to the negative ones. Whatever your opinion on this controversial subject, no one can argue but that young people need help to make intelligent decisions in these areas affecting their lives so strongly. I have analyzed the major ethical approaches extant elsewhere (Zeigler in Galasso, 1988, p.

311). These I have identified as (1) authoritarianism (legalism), (2) relativism (or antinomianism), (3) situationism (with some similarity to f1), (4) scientific ethics (pragmatism applied to ethics), (5) "good reasons" approach (the "moral point of view"), and (6) emotivism (analytic philosophy's response to ethical problems that arise).

Employing a Pragmatic, Scientific-Method

Approach to Ethical Decision-Making

My assignment here is to explain that I have personally opted for a pragmatic, scientific-ethics approach to ethical decision-making., and then to provide an example that outline how it can work in practice. My initial premise is that we have been living in a crisis of human values during the second half of the twentieth century especially. We have traditionally turned to religion and philosophy for moral and ethical guidance, but today our confidence in these fields has been disintegrating. Conversely, many have found that the invasion of science and technology into our lives has bestowed benefits upon us, but they question at times the "hazardous side effects" of such progress.

We have been told further that the twentieth century is a transitional one in which the old order is most definitely being replaced by the new. But what is not generally appreciated is that the rate of change in society is gradually accelerating--and that this acceleration may well continue to increase. All of this has led me to align myself ever more strongly with the pragmatic position holding that we in the Western world must eliminate the persisting dualism that has

traditionally separated investigation about the physical world from the study of human behavior in relation to moral values and virtues. I have been comforted by the fact that I am far from alone in holding this position. Rorty (1982) explains how the pragmatist holding this stance,

sees no need to worry about whether Plato or Kant was right in thinking that something nonspatio-temporal made moral judgments true, nor about whether the absence of such a thing means that such judgments are "merely expressions of emotion" or "merely conventional" or "merely subjective" (p. xvi).

It is my position, therefore, that society's present predicament demands more than the application of traditional philosophic or current analytic approaches to solve problems in ethical decision-making. I believe that society's typical drift and failure to employ scientific method in the realm of so-called moral goods, as well as in the realm of so-called natural goods, has kept our world in a position where changes in values have come about accidentally or arbitrarily (or with some combination of the two). Social theory has warned us in this respect for decades about the powerful controlling influences of societal values and norms.

Accordingly, what is needed is consensus on the idea that there is no inevitable, unassailable difference in kind between what we have called "human nature" and what we have identified as the "physical world." If such consensus can be achieved, we will then be able to

bring the forces of science to bear increasingly and more effectively on all human behavior. Actually, John Dewey saw this need when he comprehended that the consequences of "inherited institutions and customs" should be examined with an eye to "intelligent consideration of the ways in which they are to be intentionally modified on behalf of generation of different consequences" (what a way with words he didn't have!) (1929, pp. 272-273). Dewey then went one step further with the assertion that we need a faith (1) that science can indeed bring about complete agreement on factual belief about human behavior; (2) that such agreement in factual belief will soon result in agreement in attitudes held by people; and (3) that, resultantly, continuous adaptation of values to society's changing needs will eventually effect the directed reconstruction of all social institutions (1948, p. xxiii). (If the truth be known, I think this is exactly what has been happening in most of our ethical dilemmas in an agonizingly slow, amorphous way. However, the trouble with permitting such drift is that it often results in a dubious outcome. Eventually, keeping in mind the developments in regard to nuclear armaments and general environmental degradation, this could well mean that we earthlings will destroy ourselves in the process!)

Interestingly, if society were to place its faith in scientific method as described immediately above, it would in no way negate the work of the analytic philosopher who subscribes to the language analysis technique within an emotivist approach. In fact, such analytic endeavor is scientific and can assist science in a vital way by dispensing with possible fallacious premises and non-sense terms

resulting in more insightful, correctly stated hypotheses. However, in terms of human behavior, it is at this point that a wholly scientific approach to ethics parts company with emotivism. The problematic factual statements are not automatically referred to the social scientist by the pragmatist, as is the case with the emotivist. Indeed, the distinction between the factual statements and the value statement is not made--it is explicitly rejected!

The classic scientific method itself is brought to bear in problem-solving. Reflective thinking begets the ideas that function as tentative solutions for concrete problems of all kinds. In the process the person as a problem-solving organism is confronted with a rapidly changing culture and must be prepared therefore to make adjustments. Habitual and/or impulsive response will often not be effective--and assuredly not as effective as reflective thinking that employs both the experience of the past and the introduction of creative ideas. As explained by Albert et al.,

. . . criterion of truth is directly related to the outcome of the reflective process. Those ideas which are successful in resolving problematic situations are true, whereas those which do not lead to satisfactory adjustments are false. . . . truth is relative rather than absolute, changing rather than eternal. . . . in science, ideas function as tentative solutions for concrete problems, i.e., as hypotheses, which must be tested by experiment. . . . (1975, p. 282).

What has just been described is, of course, basically a pragmatic idea of knowledge and truth, one that was made available to us by modern scientific development (after Darwin's evolutionary theory). Truth is to be tested (1) by its correspondence with reality and (2) by its practical results. This treatment of knowledge lies between the extremes of reason and sense perception and--in keeping with analytic philosophy's verifiability theory of meaning--revolves about those conditions under which a statement does have meaning, and just what specific meaning in the light of such conditions. Thus, if a proposition truly does have meaning, it must make some difference in people's lives. Viewed in this manner, we can appreciate what James called the "cash value" of an idea--the import that certain knowledge, having served people as an "instrument for verification," has for the fulfillment of human purpose.

The human mind, viewed within the context of pragmatism, is a social phenomenon that "expands" when meaning interactions occur between organisms because of their identification with each other. In this way the individual's mind serves to form knowledge (or truth) because of the experiences with which it is involved. Such a mind must be adaptable because it encounters novelty in the process of living. The human's relationship with the world is a precarious one within this context. Mind "is an abstraction derived from the concreta of intelligent behavior" (Kaplan, 1961, p. 26). Through a gradual evolution, the human mind has become that part of the whole of a person that enables the man or woman to cope with the surrounding

world. Through experience, therefore, the many problems we encounter have been, are, and will be solved; it's an ever-changing world.

Putting this in present context, we encounter various ethical problems in our lives today. Some are problems of a highly personal nature, while others have more of an interpersonal orientation. Other ethical problems that arise are more professional in nature because they relate to our chosen professions. We may not even recognize that some of these problems or issues are indeed ethical in nature. Typically, we seem to be resolving any such issue or problem encountered on the basis of (1) authoritarianism, (2) relativism, or (3) perhaps on the basis of what might be called "common sense, cultural utilitarianism." How much better would (could?) it be, however, if we would avail ourselves of the opportunity to expand the mind's potential through the employment of scientific, experimental method to help devise the best solutions for problems of human behavior that arise regularly?

Application of a Pragmatic Approach to the Professional-Semiprofessional-Amateur Controversy

The following is a brief outline of the steps involved in the application of a pragmatic approach to one persistent problem in competitive sport--the Professional-Semiprofessional-Amateur Controversy. (Time and space do not permit a detailed review of a more complete analysis carried out by the author; see Zeigler, 1978, pp. 35-42.) The steps to be followed are fully characteristic of an experimental problem-solving situation.

1. The smoothness of life's movement or flow is interrupted by

an obstacle. This obstacle creates a problem, and the resultant tension must be resolved to allow further movement (progress?) to take place.

(In this case the underlying problem is that the concepts of "work" and "play" have traditionally been strongly dichotomized in North America, and their typical usage is imprecise and muddled. Nowhere is the confusion more evident than when we are discussing to what extent this nomenclature "i.e., work and play" may be applied when referring to the various levels of sport participation. This accentuates what may be called the "Professional-Semiprofessional-Amateur Controversy," a problem that has been with humankind since ancient times.)

2. Humankind marshals all available, pertinent facts to help with the solution of the problem. Data gathered tends to fall in one or more patterns; subsequent analysis offers the possibility of various alternatives for action, ONE OF WHICH SHOULD BE CHOSEN AS A WORKING HYPOTHESIS.

(The terms indicated above were first defined carefully and then placed in what was called a traditional play-work definitional diagram as applied to sport and athletics. Differentiation was made among synthetic, analytic, and pseudo-statements. Second, the status, along with brief historical data, of sport/athletics in North America was reviewed "with primary attention to the university level".

Third, the possible relationship among the prevailing, pivotal social forces *e.g., economics, nationalism§ and the status of sport was discussed. The differences in the interpretation of various concepts in the three leading types of political states *i.e., democratic, communistic, monarchic§ were explained. It was explained further why and how the terms "work" and "play" have become so sharply dichotomized. Also, the evident necessity for re-evaluation of some of our basic assumptions about the outmoded amateur code in sport was discussed. It was pointed out as well that the professional in sport today is being professional in only a limited sense of the word,*i.e., concern for money§. Typically, there is no commitment to serve society through various contributions to one sport in particular, and to all sports in general. The argument was made further that the amateur should be regarded as the beginner--not as the Olympic performer who somehow refrained from taking cash on the spot for his performance *but who has received all kinds of substantive support along the way§.

Next, as a result of the investigation described above, one working hypothesis among the various courses of action open on the basis of the type of political state operating in North America was selected for experimentation. A model was devised and is recommended here for consideration and implementation. In this model the concepts of "work" and "play" as aspects of a person's "active occupation" are

altered in such a way so as not to present any insurmountable difficulties in evolving democracies. This model is titled "Aspects of a Person's Active Occupation," with play, art, and work 'as defined by Dewey§ included as the three appropriate aspects. These terms were interrelated from the standpoint of a concept of the "unified organism." See Figure 1 below.)

3. Obviously, a working hypothesis must be tested to see if the present problem/issue may be solved through the application of the particular hypothesis selected for experimentation. If, after a trial for a reasonable period of time, this hypothesis doesn't seem to be solving the problem, another alternative hypothesis should be tried. A hypothesis that proves to be acceptable provides new information, and thereby becomes true in the sense that it offers a frame of reference for the organizing of facts. Subsequently, this results in a central meaning that may then be called knowledge.
4. Determination of knowledge based on agreement in factual belief that is communicated to citizens in evolving democracies should soon result in agreement in attitude. Admittedly, social progress in any given area of endeavor is never a "straightline affair," but continuous adaptation of values to the culture's changing needs will in time effect the directed reconstruction of all social institutions.

It is at this point that experimentalistic theory of knowledge merges with the value theory of scientific ethics, inasmuch as such knowledge acquired frees humans to initiate subsequent action furthering the process of movement and change on into the indefinite future (as adapted from Zeigler, 1989, pp. 54 et ff.).

I believe there is logic in a bonafide progression--if the person wishes to progress and is sufficiently capable--through the ranks of the amateur athlete to that of the semiprofessional, and finally to that of the highly trained, proficient athletic performer--a professional (in all the best senses of this term, we hope). Based on the model described above (Figure 1), if a boy plays baseball after school, his goals are short range and therefore conceived as "play." If he continues with his interest in high school and university, and were to receive an athletic scholarship to attend university, play might soon take on many of the aspects of work. Further, when this young man (or a woman in one of a number of sports) goes away to university on a baseball scholarship, he may then be considered semiprofessional (a semipro). This would be so (1) because of the time being spent, (2) because of the middle range goals attendant to his athletic activity, (3) because of the level of performance he has achieved, and (4) because he is being paid for performing the baseball skills he has mastered. If the young man is then chosen in a draft by the major leagues, he will be forced to make a decision at Level II (Figure 1), the Goals Continuum, and also at the Level III continuum about moving from the Semiprofessional stage to the Professional stage. If the athlete succeeds at this point, he has moved to status

as a Professional so long as he continues to maintain a high level of performance.

Concluding Statement

Although it has undoubtedly been said many times before, these do appear to be truly unusual times. A world transformation is occurring, and such change is coming about rapidly because the tempo of civilization appears to be increasing exponentially. We are told that behavioral science, along with natural science, are leading humans to believe that many of their problems are as much structural as they are ideological. In other words, disregarding whether a political or social solution is to "the right" or "the left," we need to move forward to improve the world situation for our descendants. It is this type of reasoning that has rekindled my interest in the abolition of the longstanding distinction between what have been called moral goods and natural goods.

We are exhorted further to prepare for a continuing technological thrust. This means that we will necessarily have to recognize changing values with their accompanying language concomitants. In a way we are searching for an ethic in a new culture that has not yet arrived! All of these changes are having their inevitable effect on competitive sport. As the reader reflects on the example provided here to discuss the viability of a pragmatic, scientific-ethics approach that might assist with the problem in professional, semiprofessional, and amateur sport we are facing, think about how ridiculous the current situation is in connection with the selection

of the men's Olympic basketball team of the United States. "Avery Brundage, stop spinning in your grave; there is nothing you can do about the fact that the United States team will be made up of basketball players who have all become millionaires in their own right because of their athletic talent."

But is this development so wrong or evil? Not necessarily, but I believe it is wrong at this moment because we have drifted into it with inadequate rationalization. We lost the gold medal in 1988, and now we are determined to win it back in Barcelona in 1992. The United States Olympic Committee has certified the selection process for squad members, and the International Olympic Committee permits all national committees to make such decisions about eligibility. However, we could have prevented this farce. Indeed, we might have been able to rationalize this situation adequately and properly with sufficient advance planning and solicitation of world approval for this transition to out-and-out professionalism in Olympic sport.

My general conclusion is that the pragmatic, scientific-ethics approach, embodying also careful application of language analysis at all appropriate points, offers the best and ultimately the most humane approach to the many problematic issues our culture is now facing. We cannot escape the evidence that new, continually changing values are transforming our culture. Whether we are facing ethical decisions in our home life, our professional endeavor, or in our competitive sport pursuits, this approach offers humankind not a philosophy of life, but an explicit approach to applied philosophical understanding--a philosophy for the living of life today and tomorrow.

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Biography

Earle Zeigler is Professor Emeritus of Kinesiology (Physical Education) at The University of Western Ontario. To the present his professional career has extended for 51 years. In addition to a variety of professional contributions, such as presidencies of the American Academy of Physical Education, the Philosophic Society for the Study of Sport, and the North American Society for Sport Management (serving the latter as Past President), he has written some 30 books and monographs and approximately 425 articles in the philosophical, historical, management, comparative, and professional preparation aspects of the profession. For 22 years within his career, Zeigler was directly involved with teaching sport skills, coaching, and/or administering athletic programs. In 1975 Professor Zeigler received the Honour Award of the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation and the LL.D. degree from the University of Windsor. In 1978 he was chosen as the second Alliance Scholar-of-the-Year (AAHPERD). In 1989 he received the Clark W. Hetherington Award of the American Academy of Physical Education. This was followed in 1990 by the awarding of the Luther Halsey Gulick Medal for outstanding accomplishment in the profession presented as the highest honor of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.